

# Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs

## Media Release



***Director John E. Lee***

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### **For Immediate Release**

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**Olympia** - Several Washington residents have been honored with Outstanding Service to Veterans Awards for their contributions to Washington State's veterans and their families during the last year.

The awards - co-sponsored each year by the Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (VAAC) and the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs - recognize individuals who devote time and energy to improving the lives of Washington's veterans.

The awards are presented at a special luncheon in Auburn, following the awardees participation in the City's annual Veterans Day Parade, which was held on November 5.

2011 Award Recipients:

#### **Patriotic Service: Spokane County**

Brothers **Zachary and Christopher Taylor** chose to do their Eagle Scout projects at the Washington State Veterans Cemetery - Medical Lake. Their Scattering Garden and the Honor Guard walkway projects were completed on time with a ribbon cutting on July 4, 2011. Each scout also collected donations for the cemetery of \$6,200 each. (Read a WDVA Blog about the project: [Eagle Scouts Complete Projects at State Veterans Cemetery](#))

#### **Outstanding Service Officer: Pierce County**

**Mark Melton**, Service Officer for Disabled American Veterans, received his award for going above and beyond in his service to veterans. In addition to exceptional service officer work, Mark volunteers at public events, works with state and federal agencies to better assist veterans, and has a special commitment to ending homelessness among veterans.

**Outstanding Employee: Thurston County**

**Colleen Gilbert** has worked for the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs for over 16 years. Colleen truly lives the agency's mission statement of Serving Those Who Served and consistently goes above and beyond to ensure that every veteran or family member she is in contact with receives outstanding service. Colleen can often be found conducting outreach at various events on her own time, especially at weekend community events and festivals. She has worked tirelessly on efforts around the veterans' memorials and other public events honoring Washington State veterans.

**Outstanding Veteran Volunteer: Pierce County**

**Dennis Primoli** has been a constant force in his quest to ensure veterans are honored and recognized for their service. As a former member of the Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee, member and former chair of the Veterans Legislative Coalition, he has successfully lobbied for a number of bills that benefit veterans. Most recently, he supported the Hometown Heroes Raffle and was instrumental in ensuring the bill was passed.

**Outstanding Legislator: 29<sup>th</sup> Legislative District**

**Senator Steve Conway**, of the 29<sup>th</sup> Legislative District, has supported countless veteran initiatives in the Senate and previously in the House. In 2011, he was the sponsor of Senate Bill 5806 which created the Hometown Heroes Raffle. The Raffle will replenish funds in WDVA's Veterans Innovations Program which serves returning veterans and their families in need, and otherwise would have run out of funding.

**Outstanding Legislator: 23<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District**

**Representative Sherry Appleton**, of the 23rd Legislative District, is a long-time supporter of veteran initiatives and friend to veterans throughout the state. She has supported many veteran bills, including one to provide property tax relief to disabled veterans. She is the widow of a distinguished Vietnam veteran, Ron and will be accompanied by a friend, Eileen Angilletta, also the widow of a veteran.

**Outstanding Volunteer Service Officer: Whatcom County**

**Doris Kent**, the mother of a fallen soldier, volunteers at the Bellingham Vets Center and has assisted countless veterans and their families in filing claims for veteran benefits and DIC for widows. In addition, she heads up the non-profit foundation, Boots to Shoes.

**Male Non-Veteran: King County**

**Rabbi Chaim Levine** is the CEO of Hope for Heroism. One of the efforts of this organization is to bring Israeli and American troops together to show they may be far apart, but share the same post-war issues. With the help of a sponsor, Chaim has organized picnics in America (Washington State) for Israeli and American soldiers to meet each other and last year, arranged for a 10-day trip for 4 OIF/OEF American soldiers and executives (at no expense to them) to go to Israel to reunite with the soldiers they previously met and learn about their country. These soldiers are now friends on Facebook, Twitter and frequently contact each other in support and friendship.

**Outstanding Female Non-Vet: Clark County**

**Jane Jacobsen** is a resident of Vancouver, Washington and spearheaded the effort to form the Veterans Family Fund, a non-profit foundation which created a unique Certificate of Deposit. One half of the interest goes to the depositor and one half goes toward a fund to serve veterans and their families. Jane spent countless hours and financed many trips to D.C. to make this a national initiative. The Veterans Family Fund has served many veteran families since its inception.

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